



Technology Education and Literacy Teachers Collaborate for Success with Common Core Standards

SUMMARY

Collaboration among teachers is vital to addressing the Common Core Learning Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy. A technology education teacher and literacy specialist implement the Standards using complementary skills and embracing a common mission. The outcome is student-created digital Author Studies. Students demonstrate principles of effective website design and in the process enhance their abilities to write and speak grounded in evidence from texts.

Technology skills

are key to success in the 21st century. Collaboration between technology education teachers and literacy specialists can lead to powerful outcomes with the implementation of the *New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy* (CCLS/ELA). One example of such collaboration at Ditmas Intermediate School 62 is offered here.

IS 62 is a neighborhood school in Brooklyn. More than 20 percent of the students are from very diverse backgrounds. New immigrants/newcomers represent 15 percent of our population. Our school receives Title 1 funding. The focus of this description is a sixth-grade technology class and the activity is related to building website

design skills. The technology education teacher coordinated his planning and implementation with the literacy specialist to enhance learning. This activity was drawn from the technology education teacher's objectives related to Math, Science and Technology Standard 5 (Technology Education) in addition to a range of standards from CCLS/ELA. This collaboration allowed the technology education teacher to address his website design objectives through content related to ELA — that is “Author Studies” in a digital format.

Author Studies as Website “Content”

An “Author Study” is an activity where, under the guidance of teachers, the students read several literary or

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informational texts by the same author and compare and contrast the following over the author’s body of work:

- Style
- Purpose
- Message
- Craft
- Language

Author Studies can take various forms.¹ We made a decision to develop Author Study websites through the use of Weebly, a free Web authoring site. Weebly incorporates drop-and-drag features, contains pre-made designs, and allows for blogging and a host of other possibilities. (See <http://www.weebly.com/>)

Steps in Author Study Project

In the description of activities in the technology class that follows, you will find several of the CCLS/ELA Instructional Shifts at play. In particular, there are many steps where the

Mathematics, Science, and Technology/Standard 5

Technology Education

Technology: Students will apply technological knowledge and skills to design, construct, use, and evaluate products and systems to satisfy human and environmental needs.

Key Idea 3: Computers, as tools for design, modeling, information processing, communication, and system control, have greatly increased human productivity and knowledge.

Performance Indicator 2: Students will use a computer system to connect to and access needed information from various Internet sites.

New York State Education Department. <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/cte/technology/standards/computer.html>

teacher instructs and designs student activities related to:

- Writing from sources
- Writing and speaking grounded in evidence from texts
- Building academic vocabulary

1. Identifying authors and types of books. Students are asked to share their favorite authors (unassigned by the teachers). They offer many familiar popular American and British authors.

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¹ This activity is built on research completed by Rose Reissman (the literacy teacher on the team) and Mark Gura detailed in *Teaching with Author Web Sites, K-8* (Corwin, 2010). In addition, this project was informed by the work of Carol Jago in *With Rigor for All: Meeting Common Core Standards for Reading Literature* (Heinemann, 2011).

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As a result of student diversity, some authors popular in countries such as Pakistan and Uzbekistan are given. After reviewing the distinctions between “literary” and “informational” texts, students are asked to determine whether the author’s works are primarily informational or literary.

2. Critiquing existing sites. Students are given a Web design rubric by the technology education teacher. They are instructed about elements of effective Web design. Students are asked to critique an existing Author Site based on the rubric as a preparation activity for building their own author “fan site”

(see Critiquing Websites — Features to Consider). The technology and literacy teachers discuss how to evaluate websites for reliable data. Students were taught to determine whether a site was: selling a product, set up by fans, authorized (by author or his/her estate/publisher), and other characteristics that can help determine the accuracy of the information.

3. Engaging in Author Info Scavenger Hunt. As a practice activity in gathering information on their author, students were given an *Author Info Scavenger Hunt*. For example, students might be asked to find and show the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) for sites which give: baby pictures of author, author’s account for how the book title was determined, or games related to the book. As teachers rotate around the classroom, students share what they have found and teachers offer immediate feedback.

4. Outlining their Author Study “fan site.” Students write a plan for their own “fan sites” using effective website design components and the vocabulary of professional website builders. Students outline the sources of information (online and print) they will use for content, their design for a game or blog or guestbook, and perhaps a PowerPoint or video they would import into their sites. This plan is reviewed with the teachers.

Critiquing Websites — Features to Consider

Web Design Style

Is the site fast-loading and dynamic?

Does it offer vibrant images?

What is the quality of the sound/music effects?

Are all features functioning?

Does it use “dissolves” (i.e., moving gradually from one picture to another)?

Is the home page captivating?

Does the home page use tabs effectively?

Content

Is the content accurate?

Is the content interesting?

Does content include features such as games, guestbook, blog or other interaction opportunities?

5. Developing their site. With their approved plans in hand, students are introduced to Weebly. The technology education teacher circulates among the students as they begin their site development and is available to offer instruction and guidance, and address questions.

6. Publishing their work. Students publish their password-protected sites online and receive additional feedback for revising and editing from both the technology education teacher and the literacy teacher.

Sharing with Multiple Audiences as a Method for Developing CCLS Speaking and Listening Skills

Students share their Author Study sites in multiple ways with multiple audiences. For example, students:

- Present them to the class. They discuss their site design goals and challenges they encountered.
- Prepare an Author Study podcast as a part of an International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Literacy Special Interest book study on author sites.
- Present to Teacher Candidates at York College. Candidates asked many questions and this experience was very validating for the participating students and exciting for both students and candidates.

The students involved in this project are by definition “authors” and own their sites. They have a vibrant dynamic online product they can revisit, and collect multi-sector visitor feedback. They have a notch on their “middle school” Web designer and achievement resumes.

CCLS/ELA Addressed in Author Study Website Project

Many Standards are addressed in this activity. A few of these include:

RL/RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL/RI.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

W.6.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W.6.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.6.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others....

SL.6.4 Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

L.6.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

RST.6.4 Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context...

WHST.6.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

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In the 21st century, technology and literacy skills are pivotal to career success.

Parent/Caregiver Engagement

We have received many comments from parents/caregivers and some visited their child's sites and those of other students. Next year, we plan to have a family Author Site team-building workshop and inaugurate sites developed by students and parents as teams. Primary language is not a barrier since often Author Sites can be found in the parent's primary language. Translation software is another available tool. In addition, school translators can support the technology education teacher and literacy teacher in expanding this project.

Formative and Summative Assessments

In addition to the ongoing use of the rubric, other means of formative and summative assessment include: student self-assessment on rubric, teacher determined assessments of the design components for the sites, student reflections on their success as presenters (face to face as well as podcast) through a Speaking and Listening rubric developed by the literacy teacher, written feedback from presentation participants, and student spoken and written final statements about their evaluations of their website designs and their future plans to build additional sites. (By the time this question was asked, many students had already begun building additional websites on their own.)



Collaboration as a Key to Addressing CCLS

Teachers of all content areas share a goal of preparing students for college and meaningful careers that will assure their success as citizens and as individuals. In the 21st century, technology and literacy skills are pivotal to career success. In addition, this collaboration enfranchises students as readers, writers and discussants of texts (print and digital), which has value in many domains of life. We highly recommend this type of collaboration across standards, content, and areas of teaching expertise.

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